

The Remarkable Governor Spotswood

There was never anybody like the dashing young Alexander Spotswood and few have told his story as well as a young West Virginia professor by the name of John A. Caruso. He has told it in his new book "The Appalachian Frontier America's First Surge Westward." This page whets your appetite for Caruso with a bit from his book. All students of West Virginia history will want a copy of this magnificent book by a living West Virginian.

Such a man as Spotswood was naturally curious about the country beyond the mountains, which Virginia claimed by right of her ancient charter. Moreover, he had learned perhaps from the surveyor Colonel William Byrd, that the French had taken possession of the Great Lakes region where they carried on a lucrative fur trade, and had established themselves at Kaskaskia and on the lower Mississippi.

Possessed of a robust and restless spirit only slightly concealed under an air of dignity, Spotswood resolved to see things for himself. His military exercises complemented by adventurous temperament, he had been wounded at Blenheim, had fought at Malplaquet, and had risen at the age of twenty-eight to the rank of quartermaster-general.

Gentlemen and Servants

In August 1716 Spotswood assembled at Germanna 150 companies of rangers and a small group of mounted "gentlemen" with their servants and Indian guides. The expedition was to assume the form of an exploratory party. The gentlemen had excellent provisions, which included several cases of Virginia wine—both white and red—Irish aquavintaught brandy, stout, two kinds of rum (company, storey punch and cider. The bulk of a transport early on the morning of August 30 called home to their horses.

They were dressed in the latest fashions, and carried their guns and a hat decorated with a brilliant plume.

Three more days, crossing small streams, killing rattlesnakes and suffering such discomfort as that of being stung by hornets until they halted on one of the loftiest peaks of the mountains.

The occasion called for proper celebration. Spotswood delivered an eloquent address and drank to the health of the King and that of the royal family; then he led his companions down the western slope of the peak. The descent proved hazardous. The little stream they followed led to precipices which often frightened and stalled their horses. But their perseverance was eventually rewarded. They came to a smiling valley watered by a clear and beautiful river which Spotswood called the Euphrates—a name which later yielded to that of Sherandish Crossing the river, they buried in its bank a bottle which contained a paper claiming the region for their King, George I.

Wild Turkeys and Deer

The valley abounded with wild turkeys and deer and cucumbers and cantaloupes and grapes. On these they feasted and then, assembling and looting their game, drank to the health of the King in champagne, and fired a volley, drank to the Princess in Burgundy and fired a volley, drank to the royal family in ruret and fired a volley, drank to his majesty and fired a volley. In an official mood the gentlemen turned their backs to the west and facing right to the east, in defiance said to all "We are English." They were frontiersmen.

Hillbilly Jan 27 1962

article clipped by
Lout Rader Shaven

Later Spotswood proudly described "World's End" as he called the country he had visited. To encourage settlement of the western valley he purchased it as an individual proprietor, including in his purchase military stores. In 1720 he proposed that the government should own the land, but when a bill was introduced in the House of Burgesses to that effect, it was defeated. He then proposed to divide the land into 100-acre parcels and to have the expedition with the burgess governor and his knights of the Golden Horseshoe.

Before long Spotswood had acquired immense estates for

himself and his friends. His appetite for property increased with every acre he secured. In 1720 he influenced the Virginia assembly to pass an act which divided the Piedmont of Virginia into two counties, Brunswick and Spotsylvania, where the landowners enjoyed religious toleration and exemption from taxes or quitrents for a period of ten years. Spotswood and his associates put this act into operation despite the refusal of the Crown to approve it unless land grants were limited to 1,000 acres.

THE PLATE AND THE MAN



Robert Cavalier, 1700-60

The Remarkable Governor Spotswood

There was never anybody like the dashing young Alexander Spotswood and few have told his story as well as a young West Virginia professor by the name of John A. Caruso. He has told it in his new book "The Appalachian Frontier: America's First Surge Westward." This page whets your appetite for Caruso with a bit from his book. All students of West Virginia history will want a copy of this magnificent book by a living West Virginian.

Such a man as Spotswood was naturally curious about the country beyond the mountains, which Virginia claimed by right of her ancient charter. Moreover he had learned, perhaps from the surveyor Colonel William Byrd, that the French had taken possession of the Great Lakes region, where they carried on a lucrative fur trade, and had established themselves at Kaskaskia and on the lower Mississippi.

Possessed of a robust and restless spirit only slightly checked under an air of dignity, Spotswood resolved to see things for himself. His military experience complemented his adventurous temperament. He had been wounded at Blenheim and fought at Malplaquet, and had risen at the age of twenty-eight to the rank of quartermaster-general.

Gentlemen and Servants

In August 1733 Spotswood assembled at Germanna two companies of rangers and a small knot of mounted gentlemen with their servants and Indian guides. The expedition was to assume the form of an exploratory campaign. The gentlemen had a certain prestige which lent official sanction to the venture. The men, both white and red—frontiersmen, heavily stout, and well equipped with muskets, powder horns and other necessities—were on the march to the westward.

After three days, crossing small streams, killing rattlesnakes and suffering such discomfort as that of being stung by hick-nets, until they halted on one of the loftiest peaks of the mountains.

The occasion called for proper celebration. Spotswood delivered an eloquent address and drank to the health of the King and that of the royal family, then he led his companions down the western slope of the peak. The descent proved hazardous. The little streams they followed led to precipices which often frightened and stalled their horses. But their perseverance was eventually rewarded; they came on a smiling valley watered by a clear and beautiful river which Spotswood called the Euphrates—a name which later yielded to that of Shenandoah. Crossing the river, they buried in an oak a bottle which contained a paper claiming the region for their King, George I.

Wild Turkeys and Deer

The valley abounded with wild turkeys and deer and crows and other birds and prairie grasses. On these they feasted and then, ascending and climbing their girths to look to the health of the King, in solemn silence and good faith, drank to the health of His Majesty and that of the American Colonies. They then returned to the river and buried a second bottle in the soil, and a third bottle in the center of the valley.

Hillbilly Jan 27 1900
article clipped by
Lant Rader Slaven

Enter Spotswood

described "World's" as he called the country he had explored. The river was a "little" the water was "clear" and it was "good" to drink. Spotswood was "very" pleased to find a "good" who had "crossed" the "mountains" which he "discovered" in "Transylvania" in "1733" and "to" the "expedition" with "the" army and "governor" and "his" son, the "Golden Horseshoe".

Before long Spotswood had acquired immense estates for himself and his friends. His appetite for property increased with every acre he secured. In 1736 he influenced the Virginia assembly to pass an act which divided the Piedmont of Virginia into two counties, Brandywine and Spotsylvania, where the Indians enjoyed religious tolerance and exemption from taxes or quitrents for a period of ten years. Spotswood and his associates put this act into operation despite the refusal of the Crown to approve it unless land grants were limited to 1,000 acres.

THE PLATE AND THE MAN



Alexander Spotswood, the man who first explored West Virginia.